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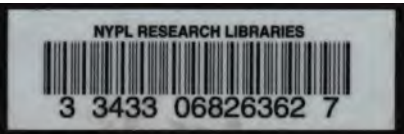
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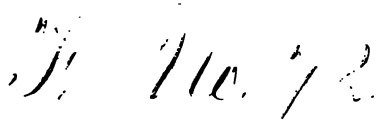

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Purchased May 1st 1897.

CHRISTIANITY:

THE

DELIVERANCE OF THE SOUL

AND

ITS LIFE.

BY

WILLIAM MOUNTFORD, A. M.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION,

BY

REV. F. D. HUNTINGTON.

BOSTON:
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INTRODUCTION

TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

PERHAPS every spiritually-minded man has desired, not only to hold, but to declare in words both clear and fervent, a faith that will satisfy the soul. This latter object has been attained, with an uncommon degree of success, in these pages. They present before us the Christian idea, in its simplicity and its power, — that simplicity, indeed, which, in spiritual things, is power. They do not address us in the technical language of creed-makers, nor cover up the quick and glowing truth under the cumbering mechanism of a scholastic-looking system. They offer religion to manly, thinking, sincere persons, — a religion which comprehends life as well as law, devotion as well as obedience, drawn from the spirit no less

than from the letter of a gospel, beyond all question everlasting. It is a religion earnest, genial, trustful, invigorating, somewhat advanced, it is to be hoped, beyond that jejune code of ethical obligations and social proprieties that has sometimes striven, both in England and this country, to pass itself off as an administration of Liberal Christianity. Not more at issue with a spiritless and superficial morality, than with an over-wrought, a vague and sentimental pietism, it would inspire the frigidity of the one by leading it reverently to Jesus Christ, and curb the ranting excesses of the other by restoring it to reason.

The title chosen by the author will be found to describe the scope and import of the volume. It analyzes the experience of an inquiring, living soul, leads it through successive stages of its history, and reveals the all-embracing principle which alone can unfold its immortal capacities, answer its wants, satisfy its aspirations, and give it peace. What the heart cries out for, it at last finds, — a Master, a Mediator, a Redeemer.

The first Part exposes the difficulty; represents the soul unregenerate, its state of sin, discontent, craving, heaviness, sorrow, — the prodigal in the

far country. Then comes the dreariness of that cold response which mighty Nature, with all her marvellous mechanism, is able to offer to this longing. And then, the blessed assurance of Him who showed us the Father, and whose divine, threefold doctrine was Faith, Hope, Charity.

In the second Part is a Christian answer to the question, so prominent in our day, and so much involved in many of the phases of modern social philosophy, how far art, refinement, intellectual culture, can be regarded as the instrument of man's salvation, rather than a belief in truth supernaturally revealed, and the voluntary reception of a life supernaturally communicated.

In the remaining portions, and scattered through the book, indeed, are many reflections, indicating a wise and careful notice of the theological tendencies of the time, and suggesting, to appreciative and susceptible minds, a great deal.

As throwing further light, possibly, at the outset, on the design, we venture to quote the following sentences from a private letter of the author: — "As it seems to me, the present unbelieving tendency originates in the heart, and still more in the imagination, and not with any σκέψις of the reason. By the help of learning

and argument, the truth of Christianity is abundantly demonstrable; but then it is not with the soul, but with the heart, that man believes unto salvation. And hence we have, at present, the maximum of Christian evidence, with the minimum of Christian conclusion. Therefore, purposely, the little book which I now send you is not cool ratiocination; and its logic is intended to be that of a soul in its completeness, and not that of a mind in a merely mathematical mood."

Readers in America, knowing Mr. Mountford only through this work and "Martyria," may be interested in the information that he is a young man, a graduate of the York (Dissenters') College, and the minister of a Unitarian congregation in King's Lynn.

F. D. H.

Boston, December, 1846.

TO

ARTHUR LUPTON, JUN., B. A.,

OF LEEDS.

DEAR FRIEND: —

You listened once to these two discourses, or rather to portions of them. To you, I inscribe them; for in the subjects on which they treat, few persons are more deeply interested than you are; and these following pages, few persons, if any, will read with more favor than yourself. As I write this, there throng into my memory thoughts of the times when we were fellow-students in the dear, quiet College at York, and remembrances, also, of other days, which since then we have enjoyed together; and there rise in my

mind, too, feelings which sanctify these recollections into something more than pleasant.

With you, the religious prospects of England are a frequent subject of speculation; and I think myself, that there are influences working in society, which in a few years may ripen into the anxiety at least, if not into the success, of a Reformation.

At present, all sects, both Established and Dissenting, which have life of their own, manifest their vitality, for the most part, in internal controversy. A very significant circumstance this! For it betokens, that what doctrines they do hold, they hold in they know not what spirit. And it is the spirit which lends to the letter its meaning. For instance, the thirty-nine articles were once a portion of common life; they were thought of and felt at the fireside and in the market-place, as well as once a week at Paul's Cross; but now they are intelligible nowhere, in their first sense, except in a theological library, and there even, only with an effort. *Profess*

the Gospel, a man can, according to any tradition of it, written or only understood; but *live* the Gospel, a man cannot, except in accordance with his own, his private feeling of it. Theology is good; but without faith it is good for nothing; so that there is no social want so urgent, as that of having those religious influences developed, which pertain to the peculiarities of our present civilization, but which are almost only latent as yet.

In the world of thought, the Christian denomination to which you and I belong is very peculiarly situated, being very widely proscribed among men, and yet almost as widely blessed; proscribed by fanatics, but blessed by the liberty wherewith in Christ it is free, and through which it can incorporate into itself the thoughts and feelings of living nobleness, as well as of departed excellence, and through which, also, it is free to welcome into its bosom every working of the heavenly and holy spirit of the Gospel, wherever manifesting itself first, whether

among Episcopalians or Independents, or, as it may happen, in the mind of some lonely worshipper, who, like Milton, can nowhere find a church except at home.

Indeed, the Liberal congregations of England are possessed of principles and feelings, and a freedom, out of which, to some extent, and according to some analogies, the Church of the future might be expected to evolve itself. A high hope this, to live in, and to labor in, and, as often one must, to suffer in! Farewell.

Ever yours,

W. MOUNTFORD.

KING'S LYNN, May, 1846.

And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know, that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.

DEUTERONOMY.

Lost, faith, — man's polar star, — naught seems to rest;
The heart's God, conscience, darkens from the breast.

Schiller.

What is religion? Faith in God. Nor is it only a sense of the High and Holy, and belief in the Invisible; but also it is a presentiment thereof, without which no kingdom of the incomprehensible, of the supermundane, in truth, no second kingdom, could be at all conceivable.

Faith there cannot be, without miracles; and faith itself is a miracle of the deepest root. To every thing which befalls, you are obliged to ascribe an origin mysterious, unforeseen, inexplicable, like genius, love, power, and every thing noble upon earth.

Two miracles you are compelled to concede, — the birth of the finite, and the birth of life in the centre of dead matter. But the admission of one thing inexplicable warrants the belief in every other; and one miracle is sufficient to annihilate all your so-called philosophy.

J. P. Richter.

DISCOURSE I.

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Rom. vii. 24, 25.

These words are part of St. Paul's description of the soul's unavailing struggles after righteousness, before aid had come through Christ. But the apostle's doctrine concerning sin, death, and ignorance of God makes his use of these terms in some sense synonymous. In Paul's theology, our human lot, as long as we are ourselves unchristian, — our human lot is "the body of this death."

For without Christ, we are without light; without Christ's life, we are without the key to this world's meaning; and without Christ in the flesh, our flesh is but a body of death.

Take from me a revealed, and leave me only a speculative God; the seal on Christ's sepulchre, — suppose it had been eternal, and that Jesus had never risen; and shut up the New Testament, with its doctrines concerning prayer to God and acceptance with him, this present life's purpose and immortality's certainty, and let all be as though the Gospel had never been; and then what am I, and what has the world around me become? Myself, I am the body of this death; for I die daily then, and the powers of my nature are only those of hopeless corruption, every beating pulse hastening the hour when the heart shall stop and putrescence begin. And the arch of heaven above, — it then shuts in upon this earth like the vault of a living grave.

But this is not the worst of being without Christ; — quite otherwise; for if I have no Jesus to believe in, as a first-born brother, O, then, along with Job, I would gladly say "to corruption, Thou art my father; to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister!" O, then welcome the grave! be it eternal, still it is welcome; for "there the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest."

Let Christian faith fail, and then this world's wickedness and weariness are intolerable; and the more thoughtful a man is, the more miserable he becomes. You may read the book of Ecclesiastes and learn there what life was before Christ, and what it would still be without him, — vanity of vanities! And for us in this age of the world, it would be worse than for Solomon; and him, royalty and wealth and genius could not save from feeling that "better is the day of death, than the day of one's birth."

What miseries there are now, which to endure rightly require all one's Christianity, and which, without that, would convert and concentrate all the feelings of our hearts into a fierce despair, — pain often making the short span of life a prolonged spasm of agony, — poverty in aggravation of the body's sufferings debarring one of the needful remedies, or the necessary food, or those many comforts which are requisite to make man's unfurnished life endurable; and this, too, in a world where the lilies of the field are arrayed in glory, and where the fowls of the air, — your Heavenly Father feedeth them.

Let a man be without Christ, let him know of himself no more than he learns from nature, and he must feel himself a mockery in the world. Let it have happened how it may; it has happened, and it is so, that most men endure life and not enjoy it; and this evil is largely augmented by the knowledge of it, by

man's having been created capable of discerning the evil of his lot, and bemoaning it, and of contrasting it with the happier world of his own thoughts, ay, and even with the happier world which the brutes actually have. The plentiful provision made for beast and bird and insect, and the evident ease of their subsistence, make the scantiness and difficulty of human living still stranger.

O, go outside any town on a summer's evening ! the insects are sporting for very joy in the last rays of light, whilst the melody of gladness rises from bush and tree, blending as it ascends with the song of the lark ; and the fragrance of the air, which is really superabundant life, is a sweet savor, like what primitive man imagined that God might be pleased with, — it is insensate nature's silent thanksgiving Thus ends the day with irrational creatures ; with them all, excepting those which are under man's control. But man's own day ends

far otherwise;—how often in the weariness of over-work, or the worse misfortune of having found no work to do; in the bitterness of industry disappointed of its just reward; in sickness of the heart, as little by little and one by one life's reasonable expectations perish; in the loathsomeness of sensuality, which so many resort to as an escape from their thoughts, or as a pitiful mode of filling up that void of happiness in their hearts, for which they find otherwise no provision made; and in that distractedness so horrible to many persons, and which, in some season or other of external quiet, makes itself felt in every heart which is unchristian. And then there are the pains, the exhaustion, and the agony which always so many are enduring,—the result of the delicate organization of the human frame. With the larger portion of men, the day ends in fatigue or suffering, and, if they think of themselves and their prospects, with dissatis-

faction. Very few they are indeed, with whom, as mere mortals, the day ends with a peace like that which pervades animal creation, in complete contentment with their worldly lot. No doubt there are multitudes, who every night lie down more than contented; but it is not with their human circumstances as such, but it is with a peace "not as the world giveth." Divest these believers of their heavenly comfort; imagine that there were no Christian prayer to close the day with, and that this town were like any one of the many heathen towns which St. Paul visited; conceive yourselves also without Christian knowledge; and then man's lot would seem to you a wanton exception to the happiness of all nature besides; and even if you had no woes of your own, still, if you were like the writer of the book of Ecclesiastes,—at least, I think it would be so with myself,—the sight of suffering inflicted apparently for no purpose, and

sympathy with my fellow-creatures in their hard and for ever hopeless lot, would thrill me, as it were, with a dying agony in every nerve of my moral being, and make St. Paul's words mine in all their bitterness, — "O, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

But it is spiritual death these words refer to chiefly. The Christian view of life, — step aside from that, and it is into a position "having no hope and without God in the world." No hope, and no God! It is so, and the more horribly so, the farther you recede from discipleship with Christ. In earlier ages Deity might be believed in under various characters; but as men grow wiser, they have need of a purer religion; so that now it may be said, that, with an intelligent man, faith in religion is proportionate to the purity of it, — that he believes and can believe in God only as far as his belief is like Christ's doctrine, — Christ's

own doctrine, I mean, not creeds of any kind, whether of the Established Church, or of dissenters from it.

Now, were we without Christianity this day, existence would be without worth, and our souls without the means of life. "Now nearly six thousand years," we should say, "has the world — a heathen world then — has the world gone on, and no God ever been heard of, except such idols as human fear has made. Right is violated, and justice outraged with impunity; crime prospers; and amid the world's chicaneries, the unscrupulous is the only safe path. The very names of rectitude and purity are derided; and, indeed, are they any thing more than words? I may think so, but others think differently; and why are my ideas to be trusted, rather than those of other men? and are not mine superstitions merely? or, how can I tell that what is right with me is right with God also? nay, may not my ac-

tions under the mistaken name of righteousness be the very worst of offences against him? or, after all, is God to be offended? A handful of animated dust sin against the Majesty of Heaven! An infinite God heed the thoughts formed within the narrow circumference of a human brain!" And thus unbelief would reason on, as indeed it does now; for God, when excluded from any concern in human life, is thought of simply as a mighty force, driving the currents of existence through the veins of nature; and when no longer conceived of as a God of justice, love, and truth, his intelligence is very soon doubted, and the Deity is degraded into mere mechanism, framed of itself many ages ago, by chance. But men cannot disbelieve God permanently; no nation, no one age, ever did; for, in their uttermost skepticism, there is a something in men's hearts that cannot be stifled, and which at last gets utterance in something like Lord

Bacon's words : — " I had rather believe all the fables in the Legend, and the Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this Universal frame is without a mind."

Skepticism, commonly, is followed not by belief only, but by the most credulous superstition ; and usually the one is the immediate successor of the other ; nay, and they have occasionally a strange coexistence, not only in the same age, but in the same mind. Whenever the Sadducee appears in society, the Pharisee is behind him, and that by not more than a single step ; and his is the evil mainly described by St. Paul, in the words " body of this death."

And those words are none too strong ; for they are to be found in a connection which does justify them fully. Imagine yourselves in the mental position of the Apostle ; here is the law, and there, only half-known, is the Judge ; and this the work, —to fulfil all right-

eousness. It is an impossibility; and so Paul found it; for the more he labored at obedience, the greater sinner he felt himself, the imperfection of his service becoming the more manifest to him; and, to his imagination, God's countenance against him, day by day, growing sterner. Then, in these circumstances, fear would vitiate worship; and as fear increased into dread, worship would degenerate into superstition. Avoidance of sin would be more thought of than growth in holiness; and the more the law was looked to, the more numerous aberrations would appear to become, and the more hopeless the possibility of strict obedience; so that, at last, the very law which was given to direct men right would seem itself to become "the strength of sin."

This was Paul's Jewish experience, — owning a law which he did not, and in his human frailty could not, quite observe; knowing how his accountability for sin was accumulating,

day by day; feeling, probably, his idea of God modified by every little change in his conception of duty, and his notion of duty varying with every speculation of an over-anxious mind on the subject of God; dissatisfied with himself, and in terror of Heaven, and with the conviction daily growing upon him that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God," — in doubt, dread, despair, he exclaims, — "O, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

What use is this experience of St. Paul's? A like use with the Scriptures, — for reproof and for instruction in righteousness. It may, possibly, serve as an explanation of some of your own darker experiences, and certainly prefigures the spiritual state which sooner or later must develope itself in every soul which is not yet Christian.

Wretched man that I am! who shall de-

liver me? There is some deliverer, then? Yes! that I know, — that I feel! It is because I am conscious of this darkness, that I know myself capable of light; and if capable, then created for light. I am bewildered in life, — I know it, — and therefore know that right guidance is possible; for it is my sense of bewilderment which argues my having been created for "a path, shining unto perfect day." An argument this, a presumption! O, would that it were proof! has been the wish of many a benighted soul.

At home, man looks into the face of his wife, or he is caressed by his children; and he is satisfied that it is his nature to love, and to be beloved in turn. Or he is grasped by the hand of friendship, and is blessed with one kind service after another; and the confidingness of his own disposition is answered by the fidelity of his friend's; and he sees that friendship is a natural sentiment, and one safe and

right to indulge. Or, turning from his fellow-creatures to the scenery amid which they live, — let it be but into a garden, — and the very hedge pleases him ; and when looked into, the eye of every flower seems to radiate loveliness. Among many pleasures, this is a peculiar one ; but still man does not doubt that it is an intended affinity which exists between his soul and the scenery of nature. But sometimes other powers of the spirit are astir, and they of a kind not to be satisfied by the sight of fellow-creatures, nor indeed of any created thing ; and then the man looks heavenwards ; but there is no answering object visible ; there is a want in his heart, vaster than the world can fill, — a longing, an anxiety, unutterable except by tears ; for never does and never can the soul find rest except in Him who created it, and who created it for himself.

But only through Christ have we access unto the Father. Man may be pointed to the

powers of nature, and may be told that they are the wisdom and the almightiness of the Divine Will; but then they seem to work on, man's happiness or misery, and man himself, all unheeded. Or, he may be directed to the heavens, and be told astronomically of the myriads of miles over which the Divine presence may be proved to extend. O, if that be *all*, the very thought is afflictive! Yes, there go the planets, never varying a moment or a hair's breadth in their appointed circuits! There shine the fixed stars, — every one of them a sun, and the centre of attendant worlds! And there intervening stretch away the fields of infinity! But this *sight* is not *faith*; nay! it makes faith the more needful; for the feeling which it excites is that of wonder, deep, infinite, and even painful; but still only wonder. I am looking for a providence; and there I see only the exactness of machinery. My heart misgives me, the longer I look; for

it is a spectacle to abase and affright me, and not to encourage. It is there palpable enough, — omnipotence ! But omnipotent what ? Love, indifference, or hatred ? For men have as often believed the ~~two~~ last as the first. Which must I believe ? O, on the wide-spread tree of life, is my existence any thing more than a leaf, which shall be shaken off by the lapse of time, and that for ever, — O, for ever !—perhaps ? The seasons in their regular and world-wide courses, the ocean in its ebb and flow, the ever-changing moon in her revolutions round our earth, our earth revolving annually round the sun, and the sun in its turn borne along with the whole host of heaven, round a yet undiscovered centre, — these together evince the working of a machinery almighty and infallible ; — but mechanism only. This is all that visible nature has to teach concerning God.

O, the heart cries aloud for one word of

sympathy between itself and its Maker! If Providence be no more than the provision of food, then let me perish; for "man doth not live by bread alone." There is a craving in my soul, which not the creation, but only the Creator's self, can satisfy. How I came by them I know not; but I have faculties within me, of which this earth may be the grave, but never can be the complete scene. But one word! and I could trust and endure and love with all my heart, and soul, and strength. I know, I know that in God I live and move and have my being; but so do the fowls of heaven and the beasts of the field. To me is he any thing more than to them,—any thing dearer to me, than an enginery of suns and planets? I have a spirit within me; O, is there a God of spirits, or is my soul merely for this earth's uses,—an inspiration of understanding, that by the help thereof I may eat and drink the more delicately, and live along

with my fellow-creatures in the better order? And if God should be mindful of man, how shall I please him then? O that my darkened mind did know him, for then I could serve him! O for *one word* of sympathy, one understanding Word between us!

This distraction! This most awful uncertainty! Life wearing on, and life's use all unknown! Encircled in the arms of omnipotence, and yet ignorant whether at death they lay me down for a deep sleep, or crush me everlastingly! My soul perishing for lack of truth, and that eternally perhaps! This want of belief, or rather this horror of not knowing how to believe! "O, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

This is man's position by nature; and it is to this state of mind that the Gospel is addressed. One of the ancient Fathers says, that he who never doubted never believed;

perhaps it may be said more correctly, that he never believed gladly, who never felt the want of the Gospel, — some such want of it as has now been shown to exist in human nature. And certain it is that a man shall profess Christianity twenty, fifty years, and then find, in the fifty-first, that, though professing, he has not been believing, has had a well of living water within him and not known it, till calamity, or till the soberness of advancing life has made him feel his human, mortal nature; and refreshing then, understood and blessed, becomes the living water, upspringing for him into everlasting life. It is then that the believer becomes conscious of a new existence; it is then that he feels a something like apostolic triumph; it is then that he can make St. Paul's exclamation his own, — not the words only, but the joy also, the faith, the sense of deliverance, the conscious strength, — "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Jesus the Son, *the Son* of God! — and God be thanked, too, that he took not upon him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham; and along with it, our dangers, wants, and duties, our joys and our sorrows. He was invested with our very nature, and his heavenly spirit shining through shows, explains, and glorifies it. Looking upon Christ's person, I learn what I am myself, or shall be in my perfected state; and looking through Christ's spirit into infinity, there is shown to me the Father. The *word*, which I longed for, has been made flesh and dwelt among us, — that Understanding Word between my Maker and myself, — Jesus, the Mediator between God and man. Now I can, now I do, now "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Always there has been light shining in the world's darkness, but the darkness could comprehend it not; so that the Gospel is the very

help which man wanted, and would have wanted for ever. The progress of society developed the invention of the telescope; and through it the Divine Government was beheld, extending away beyond the few miles of this earth, and beyond the blue firmament, illimitably. But along with this increase of knowledge was evolved a greater necessity for the Gospel than before; for if one man has a greater need of it than another, the man of intellect has. So He who overlooks society, in all its changing civilizations, and its growing wants, and who at first "commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ,"—in the face of Jesus Christ; and so more intelligibly far, than in the handiwork of the firmament, or in all nature else; because it is not for man to "find out the Almighty unto perfection"; since "clouds

and darkness are round about the foundations of his throne," and for the unfolding and justification of his plans in the world, ages are requisite ; while man perishes, only some few letters having become visible to him of that glorious argument, which in the consummation of the world's history will

> " Assert Eternal Providence,
> And justify the ways of God to man."

Uncertainty as to the Divine Character, want of familiarity with it, — these need exist no longer ; nay ! for a Christian, they must not. No longer need man feel estranged by the immensity of the Ruler of Heaven and Earth ; for also " God was in Christ." Wherever the Gospel is read, there the key-note to the universe is sounded ; and he that hath ears to hear may rejoice in it evermore. Wherever Christ is known, there may the Father Almighty be understood. Yes, Christ is the Creator's representative among us.

Mysterious, and as yet only working itself out, the Father's Providence is to be believed in, as identical in character with the Son's spirit. The disposition of Jesus, as developed to our joyous study in the chapters of the four Gospels, is really that of God himself in this world's various arrangements. What Christ was once among the tribes of Israel, God is evermore among all the nations of the earth. What Jesus was known to have been, when his life in Judea was finished, God also will manifest himself to have been in the earth, at that last day, when centuries shall have been all spent, and revolutions have been all summed up, and when the world's history shall be closed. What Jesus Christ was in the days of his flesh, God will sometime show himself to have been in the earth, which is his habitation, — so certainly as that he who hath seen the Son may be said to have seen the Father.

Christ's recorded conduct in Nazareth, Nain, Cana, and Capernaum, cities of Galilee, exemplifies the purity, rectitude, and love with which the Divine Presence pervades this earth, and the infinity which radiates in every direction from it. O the faith concerning God, so congenial and joyous, which the Christian has! From land to land, from earth to heaven, from the centre into infinity, if infinite power has outstretched the fields of space, everywhere and throughout them there glows an infinite affection, tender as that of Christ for the beloved disciple!

This, this is deliverance from death and worse, — to believe that evermore there is a presence round us like Christ's own, — to believe that, whatever our mood, happy or sorrowful, in remorse or in righteous aspiration, in discourse or in meditative stillness, our homes have a spirit within them, like

that with which the Saviour's visit filled once the house of Lazarus. Infinite condescension, mercy inexhaustible, and love like the love of the Saviour, — these are over and around us evermore, invisible, indeed, but conjoined with almightiness to subserve them, and to work out their all-blessed and all-blessing purposes. In the agony of repentance, when we could wish that hills and mountains would fall upon us, if only they could hide us from our thoughts, there is an Eye always watching us with emotions like those with which the Lord once looked upon Peter. And in all our earthly circumstances, and in every spiritual vicissitude, there is with us, — if only through faith we will put ourselves in communion with it, — there is with us a sympathy, comforting, considerate, and strengthening, like Christ's was of old, and open to us every moment.

Sympathy, — how barren and worthless ex-

istence is without it! Without it, the universe is but a dungeon round us. The soul thirsts to be known. Every man, at times, hungers and thirsts to be understood; and even the criminal does; for he thinks, and rightly, that if the worst were known of him, so he were himself but known thoroughly, that he should be the better thought of. Just as selfishness is a germ of all vice, so to feel left to one's self is the very essence of misery, and the nobler the nature so situated, the acuter is its agony, — the throbbing of that bond which runs through our human nature, with which God has linked men to one another and to himself, and through himself to all orders of spiritual beings. Living amid a multitude of human beings, and to be in want of friendship, is sad enough, — but to want faith in the universe itself is horrible; and when the destitution is felt, it is that wretchedness of which hell itself

is scarcely more than the intensity. Since there is no affliction but is mitigated by sympathy, one could conceive that all the evils of life were endurable, if only we were in Christ's company. That company is ours; or, if not that exactly, a surrounding spirit, of which Christ's was itself, but on earth, the temporary manifestation. Wretched no longer, but believing, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Through Jesus Christ our Lord is God to be thanked now, and not, as of old, through the agency of smoking sacrifices. He is to be thought of now as the Father of Spirits, rather than as the mere Majesty of Heaven; and reconciliation with him is different now. It is no longer, — So much duty do I discharge; so many written or printed laws of God have I observed from my youth up, — for this was the Jewish notion of acceptance with him; and it is not

Jewish only; for it is an error which largely characterizes an apathetic Christianity. Christianity is other and more than strict; it is divine, — the life of God in the soul, as our Puritan forefathers used to describe it. Its spirit is not that "of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind"; — faith, hope, and charity being its three primal manifestations.

Faith in Jesus Christ! as having been acceptable with God; faith in his spirit, as being possible for ourselves to grow into; and faith in the efficacy and abiding purpose of that prayer, — "As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."

Hope! as befits us human beings in this early childhood of our immortality; for without it, often and often, must man sin against his Maker, in his secret soul; and if he does not doubt, must be as gloomy as though he doubted the Divine Character. For

what a scale is the universe constructed on! According to the swiftest motion which man can generate, one million of years would be requisite to report the birth of a human being at the nearest fixed star; while more than another million would probably be necessary for carrying the news one stage farther into the universe; the creature himself commonly perishing the while, in decrepitude, at threescore years and ten. Wonderful and full of deepest mystery are the relations of us, the finite, to Him, the Infinite! O, in this world, which is itself purposely constructed to alternate night with morning, the stupendous heights of a universe like ours may well cast occasional shadows over our lowly lives, — and shadows so deep, as that, but for hope, they would sometimes feel like the thickening blights of annihilation. When cast down, therefore, O my soul! and disquieted within me, "hope thou in God."

And charity! love of one another! We live in the love of God, and can only live so. God is love. And, knowing this, what more can be said than "Little children, love one another." Or, if a thought might avail for charity, think of yourselves as in this little planetary earth of ours,—infinite heights above us all, and beneath us infinite deeps, into which one after another we must fall,—and if not eternally, it is of God's mercy. The mercy man has need of, let him show, then. Infinity around us, making us as it were a little flock crowded together on a narrow field of space, heaviest responsibilities lying on us one and all, and death before us all, what sentiment should be more natural among us, while "dwelling in this fleshly nook," than charity one with another,—charity?

Faith, hope, and charity, these three! And the spirit unfailing which feeds these three virtues is Christian, and is felt to be

of God; for he who becomes possessed of it finds his heart thenceforth beat in harmony with Providence, as one after another its decrees are published; and, growing into the likeness, he commonly grows into the assurance of heaven; for faith like this of the Christian hope and charity never do and never can converge, except in the bosom of a child of God; and wherever they meet, there is salvation, — and a salvation the early earthly experience of which is almost of itself a sufficient evidence of its heavenly efficacy. For does not the Christian see what no man else ever saw, — life's funereal aspect change into immortal promise? Does he not feel himself to be in central reality, — there where calamity blesses, but where it can curse no longer; and where he reasons with himself in a way which is not only heavenward, but also an earnest of heaven, — as thus: — "Why are storms sent, unless it be that,

howling through the chambers of my soul, I should feel myself compelled to incorporate their violence into the strength of my own free-will, and thus be borne nigher heaven than I should otherwise reach ?" This is a philosophy which is acquired nowhere except in that Church of which the Man of Sorrows is the Head, and of which prayer rather than logic is the appointed means.

Man of Sorrows Jesus was, and acquainted with grief; and how otherwise could men have been delivered by him from that ancient body of death ? Indeed, now their discipleship with him is tested by the manner in which they endure their own acquaintance with grief. Affliction moves among us incessantly, and lays her hand first on one, and then upon another; the weak in the faith bow helplessly under it to the ground, and lower still, into the grave; while those without faith harden themselves against the

touch of calamity, and so embruten themselves, and thereby do worse than die. But a Christian character affliction invigorates; just as one sufferer of old found a restorative virtue in touching the very garment of the suffering Saviour. Jesus was God's Messiah to the whole earth, and sorrows are God's private messengers to us, his several children. We believe in that One; and now it is easy for us to believe in the kindly purpose of those others. And just as far as we are Christian do we find grief convertible into spiritual nutriment, instead of becoming, as it otherwise would, added virulence to this body of death, in which for a while we live encased.

Body of death! Well may the happiest man's earthly condition be thus mournfully called! For in every spirit, however smooth and pleasant be the groundwork of its consciousness, there are deeps of sorrow un-

known and unfathomable, which may at any moment be broken up. O, actions and objects are but mere emblems of inward realities; for very mournful are the rags and the withered limbs of poverty, and horrible are the clash and the thunder and the carnage of a battle-field; but inwrought into every soul are possibilities of worse endurances still. For a want may arise of faith, and life then grow sickly amid plenteousness and health; or an error may be discovered, and the crash of an earth torn from its orbit might be felt as a less destruction. Yes! and the inner life is intenser often than the outward seeming; for with some persons, under apparent calmness, there is a struggle of thought severer than empires have sometimes been upturned with; and in the secrecy of some chambers there are cries of remorse and grief, which, for great bitterness, feel like those of the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain together.

What? You are unconscious of any thing

of this nature; you feel few and feeble impulses to prayer at present; at present this life suffices you; and you can live comfortably in some lower Spirit than the Holy; can you? Be it so; and there are thousands like you; still you are human, and the human development of your soul you cannot prevent; for you are not in your own world, but in God's world, and your own mind, as you did not create it, so you cannot alter nor even modify its laws; for these will unfold, and, it may be, avenge themselves. Sooner or later, one side of the grave or the other, must every faculty of your worldly disposition, and every power of your as yet unchristian thought, be concentrated in the agony of that question, — Wretched that I am! who shall deliver me?

You cannot doubt this. But are you indeed not satisfied of it? Is not your nature human? The Confessions of St. Augustine; Luther's account of his Catholic life;

the relation of George Fox's miseries, — those doubts and that despair which he suffered, till his darkness was enlightened by the dayspring from on high; what is understood to have been Goethe's youthful experience; the mental history of Blanco White; and, in earlier times, the book of Ecclesiastes, and the autobiographical passages in the Epistle to the Romans; — these, and other such narrations, in which are manifested the religious workings of the greatest minds; do they not reveal us to ourselves? It was our human nature which wrought within these men, — that nature which will, which inevitably must, develop in us like wants with theirs. For, the agony of hungering and thirsting after righteousness which formerly men felt, — is it become impossible? No, no! Your soul may be enwrapped in modern apathy, as in a garment; but it is no more than a garment; and there is an Eye, before

whose consuming glance it would perish from around you ; and indeed there is an unborn strength within you, which will sometime in its struggles rend that earthly vesture everlastingly. Happy they who know themselves, for they will acquaint themselves with God, and be at peace ! In the mental sufferings of others, fortunate they who can recognize the nature of their own spiritual wants, and who are thus brought to thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord !

No generation excepted, no one individual of this Christian era excepted, humanity as it were cried aloud through the lips of St. Paul, — " Wretched that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? " Listen now, and think how, through the ever changing ages, fifty generations or more have heard those unchanging words, weighty now, not only with heavenly meaning, but also with earth's long experience, — " I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord ! "

Canst thou by searching find out God? Job.

Where there is no vision, the people perish.
Proverbs.

Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth. St. John.

For what are men better than sheep or goats,
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer,
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

Alfred Tennyson.

My life is a frail life, a corruptible life; a life, which the more it increaseth, the more it decreaseth; and the farther it goeth, the nearer it cometh to death. A deceitful life, shadow-like, and full of the mazes of death! Now I rejoice, now I languish; am flourishing now, and now infirm; now I live, and straightway I die; now I seem happy, but am always pitiable; I laugh now, and now I weep. Thus all things are subject to vicissitude, so that nothing continueth an hour in one condition. O joy above joy, exceeding all joy, and without which there is no joy! when shall I enter into thee, that I may see my God that dwelleth in thee?

St. Augustine.

DISCOURSE II.

Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

2 Cor. iv. 16.

What a contrast, this, of the outward man and the inward man! And what emphasis it gains, when one remembers that the inward life is that of an apostle, and the outward that of the Greeks! A child of God St. Paul trusted to be found; while these Greeks, some of them, called themselves, and believed themselves, children of the earth. And in one sense they were so, and favorite children too; for there were

lavished on them and around them surpassing gifts. And perhaps that Athenian fable of their having been born out of the dust of the earth originated with their native country's being a very mother to them, in bounteousness, beauty, and protection. For what a land theirs was! A land of hill, and vale, and stream; teeming with fertility so rich that the very woods seemed worthy homes for deities; a land, on the north ramparted against enemies by high mountains; and elsewhere, along its borders indented with bays, and among the shores of its many islets, washed with the very gentlest of seas; and above all, and shining over all, a glorious sun, attempering the climate to a salubrity almost unequalled, quickening into abundant produce the wheat-field and the olive-yard, the fig-tree and the vine, and everywhere, along the water-side and on the hill-top, warming a luxuriant vegetation into a shady and beauteous life!

Amid these scenes dwelt a people very peculiarly organized, active, acute, and who, as it were, lived poetry and breathed it. They were singularly susceptible of outward influences, while those of nature round them were beautiful and intense, so that it was no wonder the arts had in Greece a speedy birth, and a history such as we know they had, transforming so soon the wooden cottage into a marble palace, and man's laborious life into a long leisure, or one varied luxury rather, and drawing forth every known resource of external nature and all the sensibilities of the heart from within, and concentrating them on one point, and that the enjoyment of life. And then with these Greeks, those feelings which naturally stretch away beyond this world were soothed by art, and so moulded as to lend only a feeling of sublimity to life, — high sublimity indeed, but still restrained within the bounds

of pleasantness; so that religion was scarcely more than some loftier mood of self-enjoyment, which had the temple for its scene, and for its assistances the gorgeousness of the priesthood and the skill of the statuary, together with fragrant clouds from burning incense, and ever-varying strains of music, the most effective which skill and genius could achieve. O, this Greek religion was poetry itself, — the very poetry of movement, and form, and sound, and thought! Poetry indeed, but scarcely any thing more! Nay, and even as poetic feeling it was not of the highest; for it never raised its disciples to that moral elevation, where reverence for God and the feeling of the beautiful blend into one emotion, — strong and purifying as well as high, — that of "the beauty of holiness." And indeed how should it have done this? For appreciation of the lovely in nature and art is stimulated into existence by

influences from without; while the beauty of holiness is a feeling born from within, — the conjoint result of earnest aspirations and penitential moods, of many a stern self-conflict and righteous success, and day by day, of the worship of the spirit.

Now the immortality of holiness is instinctively felt along with its beauty; — or rather, perhaps, that excellence never is or can be apprehended, till there has been passed through such a discipline of the inward man, as under God's grace is its own evidence of being heavenly, — of being something more than earthly in itself and in its purpose. But though with the Greeks "the beautiful" was the manner of their life almost, and was the very spirit of their religion, yet, for the most part, their idea of it was only what had been excited in their minds by the scenes of nature; and so it was, that though the sense of the beautiful inspired the Greek

with religion, yet it uttered for him no prophecy, no doctrine of immortality, nothing more than a faint suggestion of a shadowy hereafter, painless perhaps, but joyless too. And how should it have been otherwise? For, inarticulate as are the utterances of nature now, on the subject of immortality, yet she was dumbness itself till Christianity lent her a voice. "Thus does man perish," — mourned the Greek; "outward man,"—explains the Christian apostle, and adds then that further and higher truth, — "but the inward man is renewed day by day."

Ay! here was a distinction, here a doctrine, with the reception of which Greece, downtrodden of the Roman, was elevated above her own golden age into membership with the kingdom of heaven; for thenceforth life began to be lived there above the level of the "natural man,"—life, proper, real, in the Christian, that is the true, meaning of the word. For

the riches of commerce, the safety and successes of patriotism, the exulting fearlessness of early freedom; the achievements of art, fashioning the statue into breath almost, and the painting into apparent substance, and the temple into a world-long marvel; intellect, as manifested in conversational readiness and oratorical power, in philosophy and poetry, and the poetry of religion, — these, and endowments like these, are not all; no, nor are they the primal constituents of human life, which are rather to be found in the influences strengthening within us and around us, of the high doctrine of human brotherhood; and by the presence in a house of that spirit so exclusively Christian, through which home is elevated into one of the vestibules of heaven; in all its relations and in all its recesses, being so sanctified by love, and trust, and conscious responsibility, as that common duties, in their discharge, become heavenly life; and the mere

routine of the household, an acted thanksgiving, as it were; or, in seasons of distress, a supplication embodied in movements instead of words. Yes! life consists in affections such as these, and in the faith which feels earth under it, like a broad stepping-stone to heaven; faith in God's love, by which we can love in return, with all our hearts, and souls, and strength; faith in the order of the universe, by which we can endure, and strive, and hope unto the end; living faith in this life of ours, and in its vast capacities, by which the first movement of a holy thought is quickened into all the intensity of a vow; growing faith, through which to-day becomes more precious than yesterday, and this month and this year more profitable than any preceding season; so as that old age finds concentrated on the last period of its life, not only all the solemnity of previous existence, but all the docility of childhood too, and all the onward-looking of

youth, and more than all the righteous opportunities of manhood. Yes! this *is* life,—man's experience of his Saviour's promise, "the words which I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are *life*."

The Saviour's words are distinct and practicable; but they are not to be realized in action, no, nor in thought, without an effort; and spiritual effort we are so slow to make; and especially, when it must begin, as with most of us it either has done, or will have to do, in the bitterness of self-condemnation. Then, there is not a more deteriorating matter, than owning to high obligations, and living the while in a lower spirit; for it dulls the conscience, and weakens what moral energy there is, and renders painful first and then distasteful, and at last nearly extinguishes the life of "the inward man." And, parallel with this change, another goes on; and the existence of the "outward man" grows

into unreal importance ; and there is increased notion of the power of circumstances on the mind ; which ripens at last into some vague opinion of our having been forced, formed into what we are, and of our really being very much what we were intended to be ; as though, like smooth pebbles in a brook, it was designed that our characters should be shaped by external influences, by the eddying of circumstances round us, and by the roar and the rush, merely, of that stream of time, which, through the valley of the shadow of death, falls so solemnly into the infinite ocean of eternity. There is always danger of sliding into this sensuous notion of life, — fleshly, the Scriptures call it ; but there is an actual and strong tendency towards it in our present modes of thought, occasioned partly by pantheistic views of the world, and in part, ultimately, perhaps altogether, by religion's having been dogma-

tized out of all feeling. The following poetic is only the printed utterance of an error, which is very largely latent in men's minds at present, and which in too many is perilously astir.

> "For, the man
> Who, in this spirit, communes with the Forms
> Of Nature, who, with understanding heart,
> Doth know and love such objects as excite
> No morbid passions, no disquietude,
> No vengeance and no hatred, needs must feel
> The joy of that pure principle of Love
> So deeply, that, unsatisfied with aught
> Less pure and exquisite, he cannot choose
> But seek for objects of a kindred love
> In Fellow-natures and a kindred joy.
>
> So build we up the being that we are;
> Thus deeply drinking in the soul of things,
> We shall be wise perforce."

No, not perforce! The influence of nature is not inevitable wisdom; for account has to be taken of the spiritual state on which it operates. Nature does not so much

speak herself, as lend depth to what we ourselves were already thinking; and she does not communicate newness, but only enlargement of feeling. She can assist the life of "the inward man"; but, O, for originating it, she is utterly powerless; and indeed, her revelations require in the beholder an enlightened spirit, or else he may see therein only delusive visions.

It may well be imagined how a man may have a taste for the beauties of nature, and for those achievements of art which are the inspiration of nature, and dangerously mistake this civilized refinement for life of the spirit. Going up into some high mountain, I see some kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and I contrast the evanescence of these kingdoms with the apparent eternity of the earth itself; and I think then on the instability of human things, how, in times past, empire has drifted like sand

round all the shores of the Mediterranean; at an earlier period having been blown hither and thither, like dust, over the vast plains of Asia; or I reflect on myself and men as individuals, —

> "How, defaced and scarred,
> Grief hunts us down the precipice of years."

And then I think to myself, — "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Or the mood changes, perhaps, and I consider how, along the line of centuries, the generations of men have held one another by the hand, up to those first parents of mankind, who, fresh from the creating hands of the Almighty, dwelled under an Asiatic sky, in the very nursery of the human race. And thoughts arise then of the things which were before Adam was; of this earth's many changes, and its long, long history; how it was once without form and void, the very mountains being gaseous, and the whole globe but a

whirling vapor; and yet, how there was an Eye, which in the cloudings and the foldings of that world-mist witnessed the embodying of a Divine Idea, — the shaping into form of a habitable earth; land, and sea, and the foundation of cities, and the growth of mind, and the presence of religion, all of them, in that primeval vapor, open and manifest to that eye, which discerneth the end from the beginning. "O," I exclaim, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

Now in all this, and Scriptural though these concluding words be; and fondly though one may rejoice in such proofs of his religious sensibility; yet there *may* really be no more than a congenial exercise of the imagination, — no other religion at all than such as the star Sirius or the Alps might inspire. But it is a religion too often acquiesced in as sufficient; though it is really the revived

error of the ancient Greeks, — error, gross error in us, though it may have been nature in them. Alas for it! For a man may as well trust to regenerate his spirit by admiring intently some well-finished, delicately-tinted picture of the four cardinal virtues, as think that that religion is any thing more efficacious than poetry, which excites within him only the feelings of the sublime, the infinite, and the wonderful; even though these penetrate for the season his whole soul, with their various power of depressive and expanding, melancholy and rejoicing. The religion, this, of "the outward man" only! pleasant perhaps, but spiritually futile, — utterly so, unless there blend with it thoughts and affections which are the peculiar experience of "the inward man," — a consciousness of responsibility to a Creator, a chastening sense of the Divine Holiness, and that feeling of the Divine Goodness which is

of such a nature that the force of calamity cannot change, but only deepens, it.

The prophet Isaiah says, in the presence of the stars, — "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number." But ages after this saying, and in the spirit of a later and for us a more authoritative revelation, it was apostolic precept, "Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you." And the Saviour says, that through doing the doctrine, we may know that it is of God. Yes, it is thus that vague feeling is transformed into personal faith; and it is in and through the assumption of a childlike attitude towards Heaven, that, after having heard of, we can ourselves know and feel, the Father Almighty. O, in the shedding of penitential tears, in the effort and in the willingness to forgive men their trespasses, and in the instinctive and irrepressible prayer of

calamity, there is an inward revelation of the Deity to us, unlike any and all knowledge gained from the outward world; and it is religion like this, day by day, which alone can renew us, — the religion of Christ, and of the inward man.

And what has been said before of the scenery of life is true also of the events of life; for theirs is no irresistible influence; chiefly they are material, out of which, if one man strengthens himself in virtue, another builds himself up in a tower of pride and wickedness. These outward employments, and pleasures, and relations of ours, these pains and sorrows from without, are an exercise, — unto godliness, perhaps; but that is contingent altogether on the previous tendency of "the inward man"; for "unto the pure, all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience

is defiled." It is through the pollution within us, that we are tempted to defilement from without; and opportunities for righteousness around us are discernible only by help of the right, which is already within us. In spirit, a bad man walks in twilight, perhaps in darkness, or it may be that he even radiates darkness, for the confusion of others, while a good man walks along a path shining more and more unto the perfect day; but this is because his whole body is full of light, and the outward obscurity of the other is because the light that is in him is darkness; for it is indeed the same world which is around them both.

Character, — Christian character is formed from within; beginning with a man's own free choice of good and not evil, the blessing and not the curse; thriving then on that bread, which has come down from heaven; expanding with the Gospel-truths,

which, as it were, struggle within the soul for a fit habitation ; and enriched with God's grace, which evermore flows in upon the willing spirit, to purify and to strengthen it. To the mind which has been thus enlightened from within, life and the visible universe have a fulness of meaning, which even the anxious eye of the bewildered heathen never noticed. For, let the soul have inward experience of its Creator, and then the handwriting of Providence on the outward world, no longer faint or dubious, becomes distinctly legible ; and in every object over the earth, and from earth to heaven, there is something spiritual, some warning discernible, some encouragement, some instruction ; and of which the Christian Scriptures are so often the interpretation. It is so from the very grass of the field, which amid its verdant glories has a rebuke for us of little faith, up to the stars of heaven,

which, night by night, shine out upon our pilgrimage through time, and have shone out, these last eighteen centuries, not in solemn beauty only, but in solemn admonition too, that as one star differeth from another star in glory, so also shall it be among ourselves, in the resurrection of the dead. "To the pure all things are pure"; and to the righteously disposed, all things are either strength, or else information in righteousness. One of the results, this, of that high and mysterious endowment of ours,—free-will! However, outward circumstances thus flexible to the soul's purpose, and the inner man strong in Christ, "I can,"—the apostle says, and we may say it too,—and feel it we both may and must, "We can do all things."

All things! Yes, this was apostolic experience; but now it is a very common confession, "We can do nothing." For, while some deluded ones hope every thing externally, oth-

ers entertaining the same error, only in an altered mood, despair utterly on account of outward circumstances, which cling round them, they think, with a leaden power, and shut them out from contact with those spiritual helps, which they imagine are streaming round and into all other hearts, so much more copiously than into theirs. Spiritual weakness this, beguiling itself into the excuse of the world's invincibility! Insuperable it often enough is to the outward man; but from the inward life mountains of difficulty may be uprooted, and by faith be bidden away into the sea. "And so it might be with me," answers some despairer, "if only I were not so specially bewildered and palsied by my outward circumstances, if only these were a little pleasanter." Well, and suppose they never are to be easier; what then? Ay, what then; for that may well happen; and not improbably, when it is considered that God did not create

the world for what we call pleasure, and that it was not to pleasure that Christ came to redeem men. Nay, hear Christ himself, who "said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it."

It is our faith, which is weak, and not life, which is exhausted of its capabilities. We are so slow of heart to believe in the possibility of virtue! This despondency concerning our lot is indeed practical atheism. No God in the whole wide world! — this atheism of the head is not common; but how frequent is the skepticism of the heart, mourning to itself that there is no good in life! And then in our melancholy we long perhaps for death, and confess to ourselves, that, if our circumstances remain externally unaltered, we must

even morally deteriorate ; must ? — already we are doing so ; for this very misgiving is itself the manifest token of spiritual perdition. So weary, so profitless, is this life of ours, when void of faith ! But many a one persuades himself, " Were there work to be done ; martyrdom to be undergone ; the world to be defied ; that I could do ; but now I have only trivial duties ! " And thou thinkest, therefore, that thou couldst more easily die than do these small things ; thou mayest believe, then, and it will be truth, that God deems thy violent death unnecessary, theandse little trials of thine the more needful. The needed change is an inward one, and can never come outwardly ; and this discomfort of ours is but the warning commencement, — our earthly and first stage in an experience like his

" Who testified this solemn truth,
Through frenzy desolated,
Nor man, nor nature, satisfy
Whom only God created."

What futility this is, of trusting to *do* good without *being* good! of hoping that outward alterations will set our virtue free, — which is indeed fast bound, but only in the fetters of its own weakness! For it is as true now as it ever was, that life, to be found, must first be renounced. Often, religion commences in the soul with the dim perception of this truth; and till it is realized in faith and feeling, there is no hope, no happiness, no abiding profit for us, in this whole universe; for otherwise our lives are acted out counter to God's Providence; and overwhelmed they must ultimately be, and sunk into the infinite deeps of wretchedness. O, this earth of ours might as reasonably be expected to circulate in a course contrary to the other planetary orbits, and escape destruction, as we hope to attain virtue of any worth, or peace at all, in any other way than through self-renunciation, — that is, till we can love God for his own sake, and do good for the sake of its goodness only.

Some glimpses of this truth all of us must have had,—such as in those seasons of prayer, when our thoughts and faculties have been most completely absorbed into an act of faith; and when we have risen from our knees, feeling that our spirits have unconsciously been drawn into a truer than their usual mood, and owning to ourselves with awe, that there have been disclosed within us depths undreamed-of of mysterious happiness, and latent but eternal affinities with another, and as yet an unexperienced, world. Or, who has not felt the felicity of disinterested conduct, of duty done in self-sacrifice; and has not recognized, as though through some prophetic instinct, that the accompanying happiness thrilled through his spirit in harmony with higher laws than those of earthly good, his soul being thereby brought into a frame consonant with the verities and the life of heaven? Or, there have been some of us, who have been beset by ca-

lamity, gathering around and upheaving from beneath, and descending from above, like special inflictions, — dense adversities, shutting out every ray of hope, and every earthly and dearly cherished prospect; and who have said to themselves, that they should go mourning all their lives; and who, when heart and flesh have failed them, and they have been left on their spiritual resources, have reasoned thus with themselves, — "The worst is come; or if worse there be, let that come; for I am ready, submissive; and what others have borne I will try and endure. Bitterness! there can't be more than a life of it; let it be mine, for once it was Christ's. O God, not my will but thine be done!" And then, leaning thus on God's arm, we have looked with a strange unearthly peace into the future, and have seen with astonishment its darkness change into marvellous light, and its divers temptations come to be counted all joy; and then in awe

and thankfulness have we confessed to ourselves how, in apparently losing our lives, we have really found them.

These, and experiences like these, what are they, but glimpses of that heavenly light which streams into and through every mind which is clear enough from passion to receive it? What are they, but corroborations of the everlasting Gospel, that while the outward man perisheth, ay! and by its very perishing, that the inward man is renewed day by day?

Let them perish, then, the years of our lives; so that there remain with us a residue of that faith which worketh experience, and which experience worketh hope, such hope as maketh not ashamed. O, they must perish, the sweet enjoyments we now have of friendship, of health, of vigorous and rejoicing thought; but some portion of their delightfulness will we perpetuate for ourselves, by the conserving power of thanksgiving; and so shall we find

that the joyousness of youth, and the blessedness of friends, through commingling now with our religious affections, shall in some sense remain with us, when years and brethren are gone.

Let them perish, as indeed some large portion of them must, — the joys of life ! for, in every disappearance of earthly good, heavenly promise shines through the vacancy, if as Christians we only look at it thoughtfully enough. Indeed, there is many an aged sufferer, who through faith sees the horizon of his desolate existence glow, in this manner, with richest light, — the whole horizon round him, as befits the dawning of a Day which is to be Universal and Everlasting.

Yes, let them perish, childhood, and youth, and manhood ; the seasons, one after another ; and, one after another, our bodily capacities for pleasure ; so only, that with their lapse there be renewed a right spirit within us ; and which spirit is indeed prophetic of a further

renewal still, — that into immortality itself. For what Milton anticipated as the crown of his old age may be our felicity perhaps ; and our minds may be enriched with life's lessons, and with the manifold grace of God,

> " Till old experience do attain
> To something like prophetic vein," —

to a wisdom so like an efflux of the Deity, that for faith, and comfort, and assurance, we should have it like " an unction from the Holy One, and know all things."

The outward man may perish, and must ; but the inward man is renewed day by day, through every mental struggle, by which some new step in righteousness is gained ; through every fervent prayer, by which the bonds of selfishness are loosened, and by which the barriers between man and God are, little by little, broken through ; and by every exercise of faith, through which we feel worlds of mystery disclosing within us and around us.

"We men, who in our morn of youth defied
The elements, must vanish;—be it so!
Enough, if something from our hands have power
To live, and act, and serve the future hour;
And if, as toward the silent tomb we go,
Through love, through hope, and faith's transcendent dower,
We feel that we are greater than we know."

Glory to God! in whom we live, and move, and have our being. Glory to the Father Almighty! whose Son was perfected once in this suffering world of ours. Glory to that Being Incomprehensible, though not Unknown or Unfelt! who can bless the willing spirit, and who does bless it, through every agency, with the rod of affliction even, as well as with the staff of his support. All glory to him! who can make of death a further development of life, — the falling away of the outward man, leaving the inward spirit freer to feel and think, to act and to enjoy.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

ISAIAH.

It is not for me to stipulate for creeds; Bible, Church, and Reason,—
These three shall lead the mind, if any can, to truth.
But I must stipulate for faith; both God and man demand it;
Trust is great in either world, if any would be well.
Verily, the skeptical propensity is an universal foe;
Sneering Pyrrho never found, nor cared to find, a friend.

Martin F. Tupper.

Philosophy has two parts, one is the preface to theology, the other is a commentary upon it; one is the anticipation, the other is the development of faith, by reason. In the history of men, as in that of humanity, faith is the primitive fact. She descends by tradition into the darkness of our ignorance; she there rouses reason from its sleep, and makes it pass from a state of tendency to one of reality; she afterwards supports its tottering steps, by an insensible and continued action; and then, when reason has come to the bounds of its natural career, faith, taking a visible shape, receives from it, together with its homage, the ideas which it has acquired, and its habitual trains of thought. Thus, in an admirable manner, is accomplished the training of the understanding.

A. F. Ozanam.

SOME COMMENTS

ON

THE FOREGOING DISCOURSES.

Christ's own doctrine, I mean, not creeds of any kind. PAGES 20, 21.

FONDLY would we persuade ourselves, that our opinions are absolutely true, instead of being only relatively so. Opinions Catholic and Protestant, Trinitarian and Arian, have been forms of religion, more or less appropriate, — outward manifestations, and changed from age to age; but having always enshrined, we will hope, an inward Christianity of Faith and Duty unchangeable. This Presbyterian idea, — English Presbyterian, — thoroughly inwrought into the mind, is worth in its effects all that the wisest creeds can effect for stability, and more than all of

what are alleged as the peculiar results of a priesthood. And, for congregations and earnest minds, it is an inexpressible privilege to be free to worship in what words and opinions approve themselves as truest to their wants and judgments.

Looking away from the present day, as one may dispassionately into a generation or two behind us, it may be said, that in England in that age few social influences were more favorable to a manly character, and a Christian character, than those which were felt in that congregational atmosphere, which Presbyterians of preceding times had in many places quite purified from superstition, and sweetened also with a charity such as had been then known on earth but rarely, for more than a thousand years. Invaluable is the spiritual legacy of religious freedom, which these Presbyterian believers bequeathed to their successors in the Christian Church, for whom there are now no legal hindrances, nor among themselves any self-imposed obstacles, why the very soul of religion should not renew itself in them individually, and in their societies from generation to generation. Ever

may it do so! since it is an ordinance for collective churches, as well as for individual men, that while the outward form perisheth, and must perish, that the inward spirit is renewable, day by day.

Divided and subdivided as Christendom is into sects, at present, the purest is a provisional church only, and ought so to think of itself, and must think so, if its spirit is to be of any Christian avail in the world's conflicts.

In the careful and sacred preservation of the Presbyterian idea of Christianity, and in the wise development of it, the Christianity of England itself may be very largely involved.

The Gospel is the very help which man wanted, and would have wanted for ever. PAGES 33, 34.

There is a theory which makes the Gospel to be of God, only as Catholic or Calvinistic peculiarities may be said to be so,—a theory which owes its acceptance, not to its own reasonableness or historical probability, but to a previously existent, though unconscious skepticism. The accompanying miracles are not received as a sufficient an-

swer to the objection; for to the acceptance of the miracles themselves there is a latent repugnance, very characteristic of the age. For this partial disbelief originates in partial culture. Since, certainly there never has been a period in which the properties and manifestations of matter have been more minutely known; while, with the indwelling spirit, which clothes itself with matter planetary, solar, and starry, as with a garment, there never, perhaps, has been an age of less sympathy. This is an evil incidental to our present stage in civilization, in which outward life is varied, active, and successful beyond all parallel, absorbing into itself nearly all thought and effort; while, as a natural consequence, inward life is singularly stagnant; and hereby the spirit of the age is disproportionately compounded, and is quite defective for the purposes of moral or religious criticism. Now, the spirit of an age largely influences the persons of it, and their judgments.

It is a scientific age, a mechanical age, a reading age. But is it equally a theopathetic age? No; it is not. Then it is not for us now to dogmatize on the mode in which "God hath spoken once."

For, God does not speak to man as a metaphysician, a chemist, an astronomer; but to man as man, — a being of worship as well as analysis, a being of remorseful and repentant moods, a being hungering sometimes after righteousness, a being to whom by nature "God may be all and in all," a being of inward life, as well as of outward action and externally gained knowledge.

In the eighteenth century, in France, Diderot was not more disqualified for judging of purity and disinterestedness, than a son of this century is for estimating the *a priori* probability and propriety of miracle.

All power is of God; the lifting of a finger is. An infant has some power over matter, a child has more, and over nature a wise man is intrusted with much; while Christ, "the first-born of every creature," had still more, — supernatural that power may be called, or, again, it may be called most natural. For Christ's *recorded* actions are no more than such as harmonize with his *known* spirit. Wonderful are they? So also was the mind which was in him; and of which his miracles are no more than the fitting, the proportionate manifestations.

Philosophical presumption now, against the superhuman in Christ, will argue sometime the subterhuman in philosophy.

Fifty generations or more have heard those unchanging words. PAGE 50.

Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever! Christianity is not only the soul of our present civilization, but is the heart now of what shall be in its completion regenerate humanity. The Gospel, — custom deadens us to its greatness, and very often something sadder still does. For there are those who listen to the words of Christ painfully, and as a duty, but who have willingness and pleasure only when being carried about by some and every wind of doctrine. That Christianity is truth absolute, and for human nature infinite, a peculiar presumption is furnishable by the history of philosophy; and from this history, one or two instances may suffice. What there is of excellent in the moral philosophy of Emmanuel Kant is really a development of Christian principle; a statement, this, which is implied in what even Schiller says in a letter to Goethe: —

I find the Christian Religion virtually the foundation of the highest and the noblest, and the various manifestations of the same in life only therefore so repugnant and insipid, because they are failed representations of this highest. If we confine ourselves to the peculiar characteristic of Christianity, which distinguishes it from all monotheistic religions, it consists in nothing else than the *abrogation of the Law*, the Kantean Imperative; in the place of which, Christianity arises to establish free-will. It is therefore, in its pure form, the exhibition of beautiful morality, or the embodying in man of the holy; and in this sense, the only Æsthetic Religion.

The very celebrated Lectures on the Nature of the Scholar and its manifestations, by Johann Gottlieb Fichte, virtually are ten very good homilies for modern use on these five Biblical texts: —

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

He that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit.

Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things.

And hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth.

In the following characteristic sentiments from

Fichte's Nature of the Scholar, there is originality of expression, but no novelty of truth, to one acquainted with the Nature of the Christian: —

Man is not placed in the world of sense alone, but the essential root of his being is in God.

It lies in the Divine Idea, that all men must come to this gladdening consciousness, — that the outward and tasteless Finite Life may be pervaded by the Infinite, and so enjoyed; and to this end, all who have been filled with the Divine Idea have labored, and shall still labor, that this consciousness, in its purest possible form, may be spread throughout the race of man.

He looks upon his individual person as a thought of the Deity; and thus his vocation — the design of his being — is to him as a purpose of God himself.

Whatever man may do, so long as he does it from himself, as a finite being, by himself, and through his own counsel, — it is vain and will sink to nothing. Only when a foreign power takes possession, and urges him forward, and lives within him, in room of his own energy, does true and real existence first take up its abode in his life. This foreign power is ever the power of God.

All things new, great, and beautiful, which have appeared in the world since its beginning, and those which will appear until its end, have appeared and will appear, through the Divine Idea, partially expressed through the chosen ones of our race.

Mystico-scholastic, — the philosophy of Fichte is, perhaps, exactly what Sir Thomas More would have employed, were he living now, and about to

lecture on scholarship, as he did once on St. Augustine's City of God, at the Church of St. Lawrence, in the Old Jewry. Very excellent Fichte's Lectures are, and it is no detraction from their excellence to say that they are good translations of great principles out of Galilean idiom and Pauline expression into modern phrase, which phraseology, however, must itself become obsolete in time.

Victor Cousin, in an essay on Religion, endeavours to identify the Christian with the Platonic theory of life; but he does so in words which almost of themselves refute his purpose, and most of which might stand as a good presumptive argument for the necessity of a Supernatural Revelation. Thus he writes: —

> That man by himself cannot attain to the Infinite, that the sphere of his consciousness and his sensibility terminates with the limits of the Variable and the Finite, that a mediator is necessary to unite the phenomenon of a day with the eternal and substantial existence; this is what we cannot doubt. Hence the necessity of a middle term between God and man; hence again the necessity, that it should be God who manifests himself to man, and that the intermediate term should come from him in order to go to man, — man being absolutely incapable of creating for himself the ladder which is to raise him to God; —

hence the necessity of a revelation. In other words, reason is contemporary with consciousness and sensibility, &c.

Now, certainly reason is reason always, — this is the German use of the word, — but man's reason and God's reason are very different, and reason since Christ is so different from what it was before Christ, that — call the process what you will, development of reason, or sanctification of it — you can hardly help feeling but that, in the person of the Saviour, human nature must, as it were, have been born again, either in itself, or else into another spiritual economy. This change is visible not merely on the face of nations, but it is discernible in some of their minutest matters. Of ancient date, were a really Christian compared with a purely Platonic author, the very tone of the writing, irrespective of its matter, would argue, I think, to a starry visitant, ignorant of this earth's history, that the soul of man had become a higher "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus."

In the Edinburgh Review for April, of this year, one of the reviewers imagines that the tenet of there being nothing on earth divine beside humanity must have been happily suggested to the writer of it by "the idea of the profound

Novalis, that the true Shekinah is man." The idea is St. Chrysostom's; but supposing that it had not been, as there is no one perhaps so exclusively philosophical, or, more truly, so shamefully unphilosophical, as not to know the New Testament at least as well as he knows Novalis, the reviewer might more reasonably have conjectured that the sentiment in question had been suggested by some one out of numberless passages in the Christian Scriptures, such as this: — "No man hath *seen* God at any time. If we love one another, God *dwelleth* in us." These last eighteen centuries of time are called after Christ; of nearly all the intelligent worship which is offered up, in this earth, Jesus Christ is the Mediator; and throughout the civilized world, and into its remotest extremities, there is not an artery of spiritual nutriment, but throbs in some faint harmony with what were once the pulsations of the Saviour's heart; and yet — how strange it is! — there are some minds, to which the Christian Scriptures are the last book to occur, as being the original of high feeling or a great thought.

It would be easy to enumerate several world-wide reputations for philosophy, which have orig-

inated simply in an exclusive inculcation of some Christian doctrine, not perhaps to be readily recognized as such, because exaggerated out of its proper proportions, and disparted from other doctrines, by which its meaning is commonly and rightly restrained.

Religious philosophies, the really veritable, — what have they been, but the world's changing pronunciations of a Word unchanging? And sectarian distinctions, what are they, but the provincialisms of Truth's empire?

All really philosophical principles are branches in the vine of Christ, fruitful while abiding in it, but as soon as dissevered from it, dying, dead, and sometimes worse than worthless.

Nigh the spiritual thrones, whence apostles judged the twelve tribes of Israel, is the Christian's rightful position; no earthly power, civil or spiritual, having dominion over his faith; of him, apostles could be and would be no more than "fellow-helpers to the truth"; and he descends from heavenly places in Christ, when any thing earthly becomes more than a helper of his joy, whether congregations, or bishops, or Parliamentary Acts, philosophers, or vastest libraries.

God be thanked for thinkers, great and good, the living, and the departed, whose uttered thoughts aid other men to think! But from the printing-press, and the rostrum, and the tomb, as well as from the pulpit, they shall be ministers to us, and no more; to us Christians, no more; since one is our Master, even Christ; and because, as soon as the Gospel passes from the lifeless page into a living mind, it becomes there the essence of all knowledge spiritually which is, and the germ also of all that shall be.

It is thus that vague feeling is transformed into personal faith. PAGE 68.

Life, to be human, or as God means it, must be active as well as contemplative. There are states of mind, dark and wretched, to disperse which you must do something, something good if possible, but some action or other certainly. Over the mind of many a solitary student broods horribly the nightmare of despondency, while the slightest business-purpose would be instant relief, though there were implied in it no more

than the stirring of a finger. Does any one say that he does not see why this should be so? What then; canst thou see into infinity? No; and yet the roots of thy spiritual existence reach down into it. Is the eighteenth century to last yet further into the nineteenth? and must always the incomprehensible be reckoned as necessarily the incredible? Truly, there are in spirit many things concerning which an inquisitive why may be asked, but for which no human therefore has been provided. Nay, if it be thought upon, it will perhaps prove that this very circumstance is one of the greater distinctions between spiritual life and animal or mechanical existence. And certainly a man's reverence for God is measurable very much by his feeling of mystery in life; for, this most irrefragable of truths, is it not the most mysterious also, that in God "we live, and move, and have our being"?

However, the miseries of the studious recluse are exceeded by those of the religious solitary. The misgivings of such a one, the failing trust, the decaying will, and the moral impotence, together with the one availing remedy, are well described in the following lines from the Ameri-

can translation of Theodore, or the Skeptic's Conversion; — a narrative of the education of a Protestant clergyman.

"World-Redeemer, Lord of Glory, as of old to zealous Paul
Thou didst come in sudden splendor, and from out the cloud didst call, —
As to Mary in the Garden did thy risen form appear, —
Come arrayed in heavenly beauty; come and speak, and I will hear.

"'Hast thou not,' the Master answered, 'hast thou not my written word?
Hast thou not to go before thee the example of the Lord?'
Blessed One! thy word of wisdom is too high for me to know;
And my feet are all too feeble for the path where thou didst go.

"Doubts torment me while I study; all my reading, and my thinking
Lead away from firm conviction, and in mire my feet are sinking.
When I turn to works of duty, — here thy law is very plain, —
But I look at thy example, strive to follow, — strive in vain.

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"Let me gaze then at thy glory; change to flesh this heart of stone!
Let the light illume my darkness, that around the Apostle shone!
Cold belief is not conviction; rules are impotent to move;
Let me *see* thy heavenly beauty; let me learn to trust and love.

"In my heart the Voice made answer, 'Ask not for a sign from heaven.
In the Gospel of the Saviour, Life as well as Light is given.
Ever looking unto Jesus, all his glory thou shalt see;
From thy heart the veil be taken, and the Word made clear to thee.

"'Love the Lord, and thou shalt see him; do his will, and thou shalt know
How the spirit lights the letter; how a little child may go,
Where the wise and prudent stumble; how a heavenly glory shines
In his acts of love and mercy, from the Gospel's simplest lines.'"

O GOD, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. PSALMS.

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. HEBREWS.

Shame were to revoke
The forward footing for a hidden shade;
Virtue gives herself light, through darkness for to wade.

Spenser.

Yet hard upon us hangs th' Eternal Light,
The ever live Ideas, the lamping fire
Of lasting intellect.

Henry More.

It is the heart, and not the reason, which has properly the perception of God. *God sensible to the heart*, — is the most compendious description of true and perfect faith.

Pascal.

THOUGHTS

TO CONCLUDE WITH.

This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive. What Christ spake is common knowledge, and to believe it as the world believes it is easy enough; but it is not so easy to believe unto salvation, that is, unto the possession of the Spirit.

There are Episcopalian and Independent, Anabaptist and Pædobaptist, Calvinistic and Arminian modes of faith, and there are the theological tendencies which are named after Pusey and Strauss; how then shall one know of the doctrine? Of the Christian doctrine, chiefly by doing it; and certainly not at all without doing it.

From the Scriptures can be deduced by mere logic a creed, but not credence, not faith. And similarity or unlikeness between the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer can be judged of by the understanding shrewdly, acutely, and still without any Christian effect. For the reader is to judge not by the letter, but by the spirit; for the letter may kill, while only the spirit gives life. And more, and some very different faculties are employed in trying the spirit, than in ascertaining the doctrines of the Gospel.

And indeed the Gospel is addressed to the soul of man, and not to some two or three of his faculties, — to man, as man was to be in this nineteenth century, and not to a possible race of critics, antiquarians, or metaphysicians.

Commonly, Christianity is doubted in the same manner as it would be unintelligible to Mephistopheles as depicted by Goethe. But it is not to such thinking, nor to a race of such defective beings, that the Gospel is addressed; but it is to creatures not without love, not without hope, not without hunger for righteousness, and not without a longing for God. And commonly, too, Christianity is attempted to be defended in the same

defective spirit in which t is doubted. For now also are Christian doctrines often " hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes."

It is not for a man to enter a church and say, " Here John Bunyan had rapturous vision of heaven, and here therefore shall I attain to assurance of it; here did Joseph Priestley satisfy his reason in religion, and here surely shall all my doubts and wants be met; or, here Hugh Latimer found righteous nourishment, here were the martyrs strengthened to resist unto blood, and therefore here shall I receive the spirit of God "; for " the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

It is not assuming the thirty-nine articles or any other creed as being infallible, that will infallibly gain the Spirit; quite otherwise; for such a proceeding is inconsistent with even the life of genius in a man, and how much more so with the higher life of the Gospel in him. When Bishop Jeremy Taylor could not believe every one of those thirty-nine articles, it ought to have been accepted as a sign that the old paths of the

Church were no longer in a direction exactly concurrent with the Spirit of God.

The sectarian spirit is very unintellectual, and still more unchristian; it is the development of the unfortunate error, on which, in part, the Reformers based our Established Church, — the error of enforcing exactness of opinion, instead of inviting to unity in a holy life, — an error which is fast running into its own refutation.

If, indeed, there ever was such a time, very lovely it was, and good to live in, when throughout all Christendom there was but one mind, when religion was unembittered by controversy, and unweakened, and when, as we fondly imagine, it was natural affection; when with him that was merry, to sing psalms was as spontaneous as laughter; and when Christian principle was so familiar and universal, as to be, like common sense, felt everywhere, and everywhere accepted.

The semblance of this once was, but not the reality. There never was a unanimous period; and those ages which have been most nearly so have not been, religiously, the most eligible.

Theologically distracted this present era may be; but not without some use are these religious

divisions, if only some inquiring spirit be made thereby to understand, that the foundations of essential Christianity are to be laid in the soul, lower much than any subject-matter of controversy.

Properly, religion is social; and when it is not so, it cannot in other respects become what it ought to be. But for a century, religion has had very little conversational utterance, very little free utterance, at all. The reason for this is, because the popular religion has become of the letter, traditional, and is not of the spirit, individual conviction, warm, congenial, and living. Are you destitute of that common aid, which your faith would have been strengthened with in a more genially religious age? So much the more necessary, then, it is, that what you can do you should do towards qualifying yourself for a life of faith.

Faith, — you have none; or, what is worse, have you only a show of it? Be it so; and yet are you capable of faith; nay! and without it you are not yourself, not human, quite. Some theory as to this universe, and your life's relation to it, you must have; do you act it out; the faith which is in you, — live it; and it will enlarge then, and strengthen within you. Out of

many an evil, good is educible, manifestly; but it is not so with sluggishness, hypocrisy, or cant. Errors have been heartily believed, to good purpose; but a make-belief even of truth is pernicious, eternally. On self-examination, there are some commonly received opinions which to thee are scarcely credible, or not fully so; and must thou proclaim thy misgivings from the house-top? Perhaps not; but at least, own matters to thyself as what they are, or seem to be; and above all, do not do that common thing, of praying to God in a false spirit, — perhaps using only ancestral phrases, and the ideas of an effete theology. "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!" This is honest, safe. But for a man's make-belief, there is scarcely on earth a cure; and hardly any other help possible from heaven than the thunder of it.

A shade of doubt is any one distressed at, or ashamed of, as though it were spiritual weakness? Why, but for doubt, or the possibility of it, there could not be faith. For belief would not be belief, but knowledge, if it could not be disputed; and religious knowledge would not be of Christ, if it appeared to solve all problems; since the very

apostles knew, and professed that they knew, only in part. And, if in this world virtue were instant happiness, and the greatest, then disinterestedness would not be possible, nor heroism. And, if the crown of reward were always as bright in the eye as the gilded offers of vice are, then God would be served for wages soon, and not for love; and instead of our ever becoming as the angels in heaven, we should certainly degenerate into sensualists, innocent perhaps, but pleasurers merely. But with you, possibly, the doubting tendency is excessive; then it must be struggled with, mainly, by moral means, and not metaphysically; for logical subtilties are, religiously, the uttermost impotencies.

Here, thou art in infinity, somewhere; but whether on the outskirts of existence, or nigh its very centre, thou canst not tell; only this thou knowest, that thou art here, with five bodily senses, certain spirit-powers, and with the chance of some threescore years and ten, — very certainly, an eternity behind thee, and whether for thee or against thee, an eternity before thee; an eternity which ever recedes away from thy bodily steps, till, in death, it will for thee become stationary,

suddenly, and in through its invisible gates shalt thou enter; for thyself, mystery in the passage; and concerning "the when, the where, the how," of thy destiny, mystery of mysteries with the earthly spectators of thy departure thenceforth.

This is human life. What faith, much or little, you have in it, and in regard to it, live; and yours will be a living faith, then, and thereby a growing faith, and one which will blossom into proportion and all beauty, as freely and naturally as grow the lilies of the field; for, pervert himself a man may; else this universe is so made by God, and by him all its influences are so arranged, as to foster a life of faith.

The vitality of faith begins with sincerity of action, and it is favored by humility in knowledge, and by charity in feeling.

Humble in his knowledge, — and what else should man be? With microscope and telescope, and much travelling and effort, men have seen into the universe, and through it, as some of them think, — and think foolishly. For, after all, what does science know now, more than the tenth century knew? Simply this, that the system of this visible earth extends up the heights of the uni-

verse a little further, and down its deeps a little further, than was previously thought. His own ignorance man has detected, but not the extent of the Divine Wisdom. The earth's history has been discovered; nature's laws have been discovered, and been made human use of. What then? Only this, — that there are laws in the world. Is any one as self-satisfied as though there were nothing beyond these laws? O folly! Did trees appear less beautiful, when the first man dug down below the first trunk of one? Or when its radicles are botanically explained, does a plant cease to be any thing wonderful? The *manner* of its growth is visible enough; but its *power* of growing is a mystery reaching lower than tap-roots, or Linnæan knowledge, or microscopic examination.

The laws of nature have been discovered,—the manner of nature, but not the mystery of it. Of this earth, with its animal and vegetable and other kingdoms, laws are the strength and the wisdom, — laws, as one may fairly assume, made not for their own sakes, but for the sake of life; and then, of these laws themselves what is the wisdom, and who is the strength, — wisdom and

strength which were before the laws were? Further; dost thou not surely feel this question open into "judgments, which are a great deep"?

Laws of the universe been discovered! Say rather, some laws, some temporary regulations, very fugitive perhaps, compared with infinite duration. Some temporary laws thou art acquainted with; but many more mayest thou and must thou be ignorant of. And what thou dost know is no exclusion of mystery from around thy life, but rather itself an increase thereof; for does it not show, that there is knowledge common to thee and to God; and so far, at least, that thou art "a partaker of the Divine nature." Fearfully and wonderfully art thou made; more fearfully and more wonderfully still art thou connected; and thy little knowledge is a fraction of what a wise Hebrew once sung of, saying,—"It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?" What indeed but this,—that in regard to life far more is *felt* than can be *seen*? that we are in the bosom of infinite being, in which is perceptible the heart's throbbing, though not the heart itself, and the warmth thereof more than the course of its

streaming current? And this characteristic of life, is it not a form, a suggestion, of faith?

Faith, again, is favored by love, — such love as man can exercise if he will, — the love of his fellow-man; for, to some extent, love is faith. That charity, which "believeth all things, hopeth all things, and endureth all things," — is it not faith in human nature? And the readier your exercise of faith in man, the stronger becomes your faith in man's God. A law of the soul is this! And you are no stranger to it; for have you not experienced, that, when you have been kindest to some creature of God, God's being has been then most blessedly felt by you, — more than known, even felt and rejoiced in? Nay; perhaps you have known something like this; that in consummate charity the thought of God will sometimes rise in the soul suddenly, so arrayed in vividness, and beauty, and lofty Majesty, as to be awful almost, as to be, on account of its very intensity, rejoiced in with trembling. Faith unfailing is the earthly reward of duty, as blessed sight is the heavenly reward of faith.

The apostles said unto the Lord, — "Increase our faith." O modern disciple, is not this thy

prayer? It is granted; if only thou wilt be sincere in thought, and act out thy thought, be also humble in knowledge, and loving in disposition, for, now too, this temper is not far from the kingdom of heaven. In this mind, and possessed of the Scriptures, certainly and soon will "the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing."

As there are diversities of gifts, some diversities there will be in theological conceptions. Among the apostles, there was a Thomas surnamed Didymus; and even ages as well as individuals have their idiosyncrasies. But the ages are not for us to be anxious about. Indeed, the only one we can well care for is the next; and already that is fashioning in this; the religion of it beginning to form in shape, and to warm into life, in the thoughts of Christian students, and in the earnestness of domestic piety, as also in the diffusive character of holiness, through which it continues to live on in a neighbourhood, long after the saint himself is dead. Does any one wish to regenerate religion for the next age, or for his young family; he must attempt it, then, in his own heart chiefly; for it is not in the store-

house of knowledge that religion is freshened, but under the fast-falling tears of repentance; it is not by an increase of argumentative acuteness that her vitality is quickened, but it is by righteous aspiration. Knowledge, theological, ecclesiastical, philosophical, is good, and is essential, and logical power is good; but for religious effect they are quite impotent, unless there blend with their use the Spirit which is of God. Save thyself, and so, and only so, wilt thou save, to some extent, the coming age.

Comply with the conditions of faith, and doubtless faith will form within thee; and the increase of it be as spontaneous in manhood, as is the growth of the body in youth. Do not doubt it; for, "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." Appointed we are, and not abandoned of God to ourselves; and our spiritual circumstances, gently constraining us, we have only not to resist.

There is an earth under the body for its support; and under the soul, and above the soul, and around the soul, is spirit, Godhead, in which for it also to live, and move, and have its being. The perishing body's relations with the perishing

earth, through the lungs and the digestive powers, are but transient illustrations of the eternal affinities, nutritive and joyous, which the soul has with the world of spirit. Infinite dost thou say that world is, — no courage in thee to trust to it, — and so profoundly silent? No, it is not; for, at least, one word out of it thou hast heard, — that *Word*, Jesus Christ, — an utterance, which, like the Deity himself, is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, — Christ the wisdom of God, and the love of God, — and to complete the character of the heavenly utterance, Christ through his miracles the power of God. This is a Word at the comprehension of which the soul starts up, and amid life's distractions is herself again, — a word sympathetically and almost instinctively felt to be of God. This word believed, this "Christ in you," is the hope of glory.

For, O, life is — no! but it may be divine; and through faith in Christ, is so. Hemmed in thou mayest be by streets, conventionalities, poverty, and the stringencies of labor, many-houred and close. This is true. But it is true also that thou art a soul, in an infinite universe, — a living soul, with an earth beneath thee, and a firmament of

heaven above thee, — and with a voice within thee, crying, but not as the passions speak, "Thou must; must do this, and not do that." Visions also hast thou, of the beautiful becoming more beautiful, and the truth more visible, and Providence more manifestly good; thy spiritual feelings yearning thus into prophetic power, — power unerringly prophetic. Poor art thou? Surely then it is in silver and gold, and such other things as apostles scarcely cared to own; since such else as they had is freely offered unto thee; for that Spirit, which is the fertility of the earth, and the brightness of the stars, is anxious to become the holiness of thy willing heart; and heirship unforfeited as yet hast thou in all which Christ lived for, and died for, and lives again for; and within easy reach exists the knowledge which has been ripening for thee in the human mind, and growing for thee, for forty centuries and more. No! thou art not without reasons for hope, any more than "without God in the world." And God canst thou know, and serve, and rejoice in, day by day, more and more; and Jesus canst thou understand and love, and through love of him, the first-born, canst thou love his and thy

brethren the more tenderly. And prayer with thee, — thy prayer may be heaven-piercing, and in thy soul's chambers, almighty with the might of its Object.

What a wondrous existence is this life of ours! Earnestly thought of, it is miraculous almost, every moment almost, from birth to death, from not being into higher being. Higher being? Perhaps not; but at least it will be existence spiritual. For, — most awful consideration, — thy destiny is self-formed, and ever forming; unheeded, or much thought of, it is ever forming. Now, in thyself, is fashioning into shape the crown of reward, — glory, honor, and immortality, if thou wilt, but thorns and perdition, otherwise. Unavoidably shall thy life's path lead up to and into the porch of eternity; but it is for thyself, it will be for thy faith, to color the gates, and make them either frown upon thee, as dungeon-doors, or gleam with golden light. What says that voice from within, the Saviour's? Let us listen. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* Amen, Lord Jesus, Amen!

ΤΩ ΘΕΩ ΔΟΞΑ.

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